



A MONTHLY ELECTRONIC NEWSLETTER TO THE 41ST ASSEMBLY DISTRICT
(Including Agoura, Agoura Hills, Calabasas, Encino, Hidden Hills, Lake Sherwood, Malibu, Oak Park, Pacific Palisades, Port Hueneme, South Oxnard, Santa Monica, Tarzana, Topanga, Westlake Village, and Woodland Hills)

MARCH 2007

Just-released Adequacy Studies Will Be Building Blocks for K-12 School Costs Report

I came to the Legislature because I wanted to restore educational excellence and close the achievement gap that persists in California. Education spending makes up roughly 50% of this state's budget, but we still lag far behind most other states in per-pupil spending.

The just-released *Getting Down to Facts Project (The Adequacy Studies)* – a comprehensive 18-month research project of over 20 studies on school governance and finance has confirmed, what we already knew, that we are failing our children. The 2005 National Assessment of Education Progress ranked California 7th from the bottom in eighth grade math, 3rd from the bottom in reading, and next to the bottom, ahead only of Mississippi, in science. Whatever differences and distinctions may be raised to question these precise rankings, dismal is the only way to describe the situation in which we now find ourselves.

The first bill that I introduced as a new Assemblymember, on the very day I was sworn into office, was AB 25. AB 25 will require the Governor's Advisory Committee on Education Excellence, and the P-16 Council established by the Superintendent of Public Instruction, to work together to develop a report by July 2009 to the Legislature with information sufficient to establish the reasonable costs of K-12 schools, and to determine the best use of those resources so that every child in California can and will meet academic performance standards.

These comprehensive, research-based studies will be the cornerstone of AB 25. It will take political will and leadership to translate these findings into policies that reflect systemic reform, but it is essential to do for the future of California. This should not be a political debate, and I hope that it can avoid the shoals of partisanship. We are all responsible for all of California's students.

It is essential that California's education system has the funding it needs to provide opportunities for our children. But clearly the problem is not just how much money we put into education. The question is "are we spending smart"? Is there a more rational and just strategy for allocating funding among schools that have wide disparities in their populations? How can we better attract and keep high-quality teachers, and insure that teachers who are struggling are not without support and resources? How do we restore hope in students who are giving up on their education and dropping out of schools that are not safe and are overcrowded and whose teachers have, themselves, lost faith in the system?

The good news is that the timing of these studies is right. There is a new focus on school finance and governance in Sacramento, and the actions that the Legislature will be working on this year and in the future will now be informed by serious scholarly research, not politics or empty promises.

The road will be long. We, as California's policymakers, can't just step into the spotlight today, proclaim our displeasure at the facts with which we are faced, and then be satisfied with a little tinkering around the edges of the status quo. This is our opportunity, and an obligation, to start making real change in the way California educates our children.

Santa Monica Education Leader Linda Gross

My Assembly “Woman of the Year”



Every year, each member of the California State Assembly and California State Senate honors a woman from his or her district who has distinguished herself in service to her community. My 2007 honoree is Linda Gross.

Linda has dedicated countless hours to enriching the lives of the students of the Santa Monica/Malibu Unified School District. She began as a speech therapist at Roosevelt Elementary and PTA President at Franklin Elementary. She was recruited by the Santa Monica Malibu Education Foundation, and as President helped to build the self-sustaining “Bells and Books of Knowledge” endowment. She is now Executive Director. I was very proud to honor her.

Assembly honorees began their day in the State Capitol with a breakfast with Lt. Governor John Garamendi. Each was then escorted down the center aisle of the Assembly Chamber, and presented with a certificate of recognition by Assembly Speaker Fabian Nuñez. A reception that afternoon finished the day.

First Legislative Package Focuses on Education and the Environment

With the deadline now passed for new 2007-08 legislation, I have introduced 21 bills, the majority of which focus on my twin passions -- educating California’s children, and protecting our fragile environment. Here are just a few:

Education

- **AB 25** – Will produce a report by July 1, 2009 that will be sent to the Legislature with adequate information to be able to establish the reasonable costs of our K-12 schools. The intent is to determine how best to use available resources to enable students to meet state academic performance standards.
- **AB 1148** – Will extend the sunset date for the Instructional Materials Funding Alignment Program to 2012, and state the intent of the Legislature that educators have many rigorous options in choosing the best materials to meet the needs of all students, including those with disabilities and English learners.
- **AB 1379** – Will require the Superintendent of Public Instruction to identify additional criteria and measures by which high school students who are proficient, but unable to pass the high school exit exam, may demonstrate their competence and receive a diploma.

Environment

- **AB 546** – Will expand recycling of electronic waste, including by requiring retailers who sell electronic equipment to make e-waste recycling information available to customers, require manufacturers to place a recycling information label on the device itself, and require solid waste landfills to accept specified e-waste items.
- **AB 564** – Will state the intent of the Legislature to enact legislation to require the State Energy Resources Conservation and Development Commission to adopt carbon neutral building standards.

Other of my bills address wage discrimination, hospital staffing, absentee voting, prescription drug consumer information, foster care, renter protection, and the working disabled. You can access my full legislative package on the Assembly website at www.assembly.ca.gov and track my or any bills as they move through the legislative process. Just click on the Legislation link and type in “Brownley.”

Capitol Staff Joins Tour with District Staff



L-R: Liz Ziebron, Jesse Switzer, Julie Gallagher, Timothy Lippman, Stephanie Burri, Cheri Orgel, Assemblywoman Julia Brownley, Guy Strahl, Louise Rishoff

The 41st AD is without doubt one of the most beautiful in the State Assembly. With my Capitol and District Staff largely new to one another, I brought my Capitol people down to the District this month for a working tour and staff retreat. We traveled along PCH on Thursday, then swung through Ventura County on Friday. The itinerary was built around some of the current issues in the District to orient everyone on the ground both on how large and diverse the District is, and to give my Northern and Southern California staff members a chance to get to know one another and forge strong working relationships.

Thursday we began on Main Street in Santa Monica and stopped at the site of the Topanga Lagoon restoration project. We proceeded up the coast to the Malibu Lagoon, Adamson House and Surfrider Beach to discuss the water quality issues that are the subject of watershed management improvements. And we viewed the Rindge Dam on Malibu Canyon, which has been silted up to the top of the dam, rendering it a serious impediment to any fish passage between the ocean and the headwaters and for beach sand replenishment. Gary Busteed from the National Park Service met us in Solstice Canyon to show us the success of their removal of several dams that had blocked endangered Steelhead Trout from their natal headwaters to spawn. And we brought in sandwiches to the very beautiful Ramirez Canyon for a late afternoon working lunch.

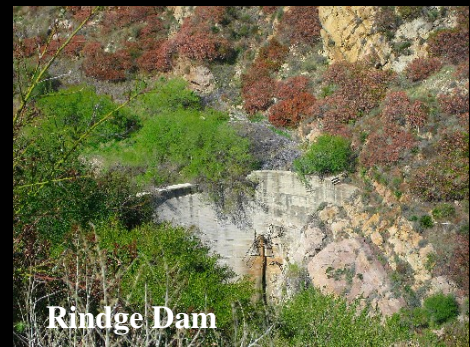
Friday we headed north. Driving through Hidden Valley and past Lake Sherwood into the vast agricultural fields of Camarillo, we arrived at California State University Channel Islands, Ventura County's first four-year university. We proceeded to Ormond Beach to the wetlands restoration area, which is threatened by the pollutants that wash and leach off the huge and toxic slag heap left by Halaco Industries when it closed its metals recycling operations. The slag heap is currently being winterized and covered by the USEPA to help prevent further runoff and contamination from any rains we may yet have.

And we drove past the Port of Hueneme and Naval Base Ventura County, and ended at the Channel Islands Harbor.

There was still much of this very large district we couldn't cover in our limited time, but there were some parts of the district that were even new to me. If you're looking for some beautiful drives on some afternoon that you're free, there is much to choose from in the 41st AD.



Topanga Lagoon



Rindge Dam



Halaco at Ormond Beach

Massive Floating LNG Platform Application Faces Critical Hearings

The hopes of BHP Billiton, an Australian mega-corporation, to moor a floating LNG regasification platform three football-fields long and seven stories high offshore from Malibu and South Oxnard are about to come face-to-face with three government agencies that must grant critical approvals. The three hearings have been scheduled back-to-back over the course of eight days in early April.

In anticipation of those hearings, and in a show of noisy and exuberant solidarity in opposition to the countless risks of the project, community activists and elected officials rallied on the Malibu Pier on Saturday, March 10.

The event was organized by California Coastal Protection Advocates. Malibu environmental advocate Keely Brosnan, who was there with her husband Pierce Brosnan, introduced the various speakers. Highlights of my remarks are below:



"We stand on one of the most magnificent coastlines in the world. Malibu – world renowned for its beaches and the millions of visitors it draws. South Oxnard – restoring historic coastal wetlands, preserving salt marsh habitat, protecting endangered birds that nest on our beaches.

Each one of us has a moral obligation to keep this ocean clean. To protect its vast range of critical habitats. To be its steward.

Do we really want this magnificent horizon behind us blighted by a towering monstrosity the size of three football fields? Or contaminating our air?

Or do we send out a message, loud and clear, that California is not going to increase our dependence on foreign fossil fuels. That we choose conservation and a new road to a more sustainable energy future for our state.

I know that the Governor is watching and listening. Your voices are critical. We will – together – continue to act until this ill-conceived application is rolled up and shipped right back to Melbourne!"



Malibu constituents Keely and Pierce Brosnan receive ovation from the crowd in gratitude for their environmental activism

The Final Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report has been released. It is a huge three-volume document, but there is a very comprehensive Executive Summary in Vol. I. The entire document can be accessed at www.cabrilloport.ene.com.

The three hearings are before the U.S. Coast Guard on April 4, the State Lands Commission on April 9, and the California Coastal Commission on April 12. I will be speaking in opposition at each, either in person or through my District Director. If you want more information on times, locations, etc., just call my District Office.

District Events

The **City of Hidden Hills** reorganized on March 12, welcoming newly-elected councilmember Larry Weber, and recognizing Monty Fisher and Stuart Siegel, who have served on the City Council since 1994. I sent my District Director to the meeting to present a certificate of appreciation to Jim Cohen for his year of service as Mayor, and also to thank Councilmembers Fisher and Siegel for their many years of dedication to this unique city.



On March 9th I took the opportunity to do a **Calleguas Municipal Water District tour** with Timothy Lippman, my District Senior Assistant and Jesse Switzer, Field Representative. Calleguas is a member of the Metropolitan Water District and distributes water on a wholesale basis to 22 local agencies and private companies. More than 75% of Ventura County residents depend on the Calleguas Water District for all or part of their water supply.

The tour was hosted by Calleguas Vice-President William Seaver and Manager of Engineering, Susan Mulligan. It began with a review of the California State Water Project that conveys water from the northern California Sierras to central and southern California. Of particular interest to the 41st AD is the Hueneme Outfall Rehabilitation Project, which will be a critical component of the overall salinity management system at Calleguas. High levels of salt in the groundwater is very problematic for Ventura County growers, particularly for strawberries and avocados.

The **Malibou Lake Mountain Club** celebrated its 85th anniversary on March 10. This is one of the longest operating clubs in the Santa Monica Mountains, tucked into a beautiful valley with the homes surrounding Malibou Lake. The lake has been the site of countless Hollywood films, beginning with the original *Frankenstein* in 1931. The community has been a strong voice for preservation of the mountains which make their area such a special one. I ordered a resolution from the State Assembly to formally recognize the Club's 85th anniversary. State Senator Sheila Kuehl, who also represents Malibou Lake, was a joint signator on the resolution, and our District Directors presented it to the residents at their gala dinner.

With Topanga another unique town in the Santa Monica Mountains, it should come as no surprise that their **Topanga Chamber of Commerce** would have its own unique character. This year, the Chamber's annual awards ceremony was held at the Mountain Mermaid, a beautiful Spanish-style home in Topanga that overlooks Topanga Canyon. The theme was a Renaissance masked ball. Feathers masks were offered to the guests at the door. Singers in Renaissance garb strolled through the crown, and occasionally an oration would break out from an upstairs balcony or a sword fight outside the windows.

Congratulations to **Jerome Kessler**, *Citizen of the Year* and Founder/Music Director of the Topanga Symphony; **The Man Store**, *Business of the Year*, and a constant friend of community fundraising events; and **Melanie Kareem Middle Eastern Dance School**, *Home-Based Business of the Year* for all the joy that her dance classes has brought to its students.

Every year, the Malibu Times honors members of the Malibu community with their ***Dolphin Awards***. This year the event was graciously hosted by Lilly Lawrence at her awe-inspiring home, Castle Kashan, a Malibu landmark residence with panoramic ocean and mountain views. The castle has a dramatic exterior, but is also filled with magnificent furnishings and personal and political mementos highlighting the long history Lilly and her distinguished family have experienced.

I was pleased to join a number of other elected officials in recognizing the Dolphin Award winners:

Peter and Elizabeth Anthony, and Deborah La Gorce Kramer for creating a much-needed pathway of safety for the students at Point Dume Marine Science Elementary School.

Candace Bowen for numerous volunteer projects, including the Malibu Pie Festival, Dolphin Run, and in local elections.

Keely Shaye Brosnan for continuing to lead the fight against the proposed LNG platform off our beautiful coast.

Chi Kim, Principal of Point Dume Marine Science Elementary School, for empowering students with the importance of environmental responsibility and personal and civic involvement.

Bob Klein founder of the Malibu Celebration of Film.

Carol Kmiec and Marnie Duke Mitze for leadership at the ARTSreach program at Pepperdine.

Cindy Linke for her dedication with "Operation Interdependence" which brings much needed cheer to our troops.

Bonnie Reiss a longtime member of the Malibu community for her dedicated service to the State with the Governor's administration.

Tarek Shraibati, for his exemplary youth mentoring as a leader in Boy Scout Troop 224.



Committee and Legislative Appointments

Chair, Assembly Budget Subcommittee #2 on Education

**Aging and Long-Term Care
Budget**

**Budget Subcommittee #3 on Resources
Education**

Natural Resources

Joint Legislative Budget Committee

Select Committee on Community Colleges

Legislative Liaison, Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission

California Commission on the Status of Women

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